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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

27 October 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence

FROM : Theodore G. Shackley
Acting Deputy Director for Operations

SUBJECT : MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Organization of Control of Operational Airborne Landing Forces in the Initial Period of a War

1. The enclosed Intelligence Information Special Report is part of a series now in preparation based on the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal 'Military Thought". This article presents a diagram of the control of airborne landing forces when a landing operation is undertaken from the interior following the initial nuclear strike. Whereas the front commander normally controlled landing forces in training exercises, the authors contend that a preferable organization of control would include a command post for the commanders of the airborne troops and military transport aviation and a forward command post using an operations group to provide communications with the landing force commander and assist in control and support. The article also examines the sequence for the transfer of control of the landing force from its preparation to the time it joins the advancing troops, and touches upon the assignment of tasks, cooperation with the front, communications, and combat and logistical support to the landing force. This article appeared in Issue No. 2 (63) for 1962.

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2. Because the source of this report is extremely sensitive, this document should be handled on a strict need-to-know basis within recipient agencies. For ease of reference, reports from this publication have been assigned

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Theodore G. Shackley

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Intelligence Information Special Report

COUNTRY USSR

DATE OF INFO. Early 1962

DATE 27 October 1976

SUBJECT

MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Organization of Control of Operational Airborne Landing Forces in the Initial Period of a War

SOURCE Documentary

Summary:

The following report is a translation from Russian of an article which appeared in Issue No. 2 (63) for 1962 of the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal 'Military Thought''. The authors of this article are General-Mayor P. Pavlenko and Colonel V. Bulatnikov. This article presents a diagram of the control of airborne landing forces when a landing operation is undertaken from the interior following the initial nuclear strike. Whereas the front commander normally controlled landing forces in training exercises, the authors contend that a preferable organization of control would include a command post for the commanders of the airborne troops and military transport aviation and a forward command post using an operations group to provide communications with the landing force commander and assist in control and support. The article also examines the sequence for the transfer of control of the landing force from its preparation to the time it joins the advancing troops, and touches upon the assignment of tasks, cooperation with the front, communications, and combat and logistical support to the landing force.

End of Summary

Comment:

General-Leytenant P. Pavlenko was identified in May 1976 as Chief of Staff of the Airborne Troops. After 1962 the SECRET version of Military Thought was published three times annually and was distributed down to the level of division commander. It reportedly ceased publication at the end of 1970.

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Organization of Control of Operational Airborne Landing Forces in the Initial Period of a War

by

General-Mayor P. Pavlenko
Colonel V. Bulatnikov

Efficient control has always been the guarantee of the successful employment of operational airborne landing forces. Under present-day conditions it has acquired even greater importance. This is explained by the fact that, first, the landing of troops has become an organic necessity in operations, and second, the massed employment of missile/nuclear weapons in the course of armed combat makes very high demands on troop control in general.

In recent years in operational games, command-staff exercises and troop exercises, control of operational airborne landing forces has been fully organized and implemented by the front commander. Airborne large units (one or two airborne divisions) and the necessary number of military transport aircraft which have been concentrated in the zone of the front by a specified time have usually been transferred to the front. The front commander has determined the departure area for the landing operation, carried out the necessary measures to prepare for it, assigned tasks to the landing force, and organized its all-round support. Such a procedure for the preparation and employment of operational airborne landing forces under certain conditions will take place in the future as well. However, it entails the preliminary concentration in the zone of the front of troops making the landing and the prolonged preparation of the departure area. It is just these circumstances which make it not very acceptable for the conditions of the initial period of war.

As is known, a modern war can be initiated by sudden massed nuclear strikes. Aggressive imperialist circles count mainly on secrecy of preparation and suddenness of nuclear attack. Immediately after the nuclear strikes combat actions will develop on land, sea, and in the air. Airborne large units, constantly in a state of increased combat readiness, will undoubtedly be employed at the very beginning of war; they will be landed after the nuclear strikes in order to complete the destruction of the most important targets of the enemy operational rear, and to assist the ground forces and navy in achieving the objectives of the initial

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operations.

Under these conditions the airborne divisions must be ready to make a landing literally a few hours after the signal is transmitted to them. This can be ensured only if the airfields of the departure area for the landing operation are located close to the permanent deployment points of the troops to be landed, since airlifts of the latter to considerable distances under the conditions of a war which has begun entail great difficulties and require a very long period of time.

Thus, we are discussing a landing operation from the interior of a country when the departure area is thousands of kilometers from the front line.

The considerable distance of the airborne large units from the line of contact of the belligerents when they are preparing for an airborne landing occasions substantial modifications of the procedure for controlling the operational airborne landing forces which is currently accepted and employed in exercises.

In the diagram is shown what we consider to be the most acceptable organization of control of an operational airborne landing force (made up of an airborne division) being landed from the interior of the country after the initial nuclear strike.

Let us briefly examine some of the elements of the diagram. The command post of the commander of the airborne troops and the military transport aviation is deployed in the departure area for the landing operation close to the staff of the airborne division. From here communications are established (primarily by radio) with the General Staff (General Headquarters of the Supreme High Command), the staff of the front in whose zone the airborne landing force is being employed, and the landing force's materiel support area. In addition, direct communications can be established as well with the commander of the district (army) of the Air Defense of the Country and with the staff of the interior military district on whose territory the departure area for the landing operation is located.

The forward command post of the commander of the military transport aviation and the operations group from the headquarters of the airborne troops are deployed at the staff of the front. It is desirable that they set to work 24 hours before the landing operation begins, however, the situation is not excluded in which their work will begin several hours before the take-off of the military transport aviation aircraft. The main

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task of the forward command post of the military transport aviation is to provide control of aviation in the course of the landing operation.

Several tasks are entrusted to the operations group from the headquarters of the airborne troops. The main one of these is to provide communications between the staff of the front and the commander of the landing force (after it is landed). The operations group also provides communications between the commander of the airborne troops and his forward command post when one is landed in the complement of a large landing force (two or three airborne divisions), and communications between the commander of the landing force and the materiel support area. In addition, the operations group may assist the operations directorate of the staff of the front somewhat in the control, maintenance, and all-round support of the airborne landing force. The group will consist of one or two operations officers and two or three officer specialists. Four or five radio sets, two or three (of the R-835, R-118, or R-115 type) for communications with the landing force in the area of its combat actions and one or two (of the R-102 type) for communications with the command post of the commander of the airborne troops and with the supply area of the landing force, will be required by way of communications means.

The control post of the chief of the landing force's supply area is deployed at one of the materiel support airfields. It can maintain communications with the landing force through the operations group of the front staff or through the command post of the commander of the airborne troops.

Now let us examine the possible procedure for control of a landing force sequentially from the moment it is prepared for the landing operation to the time it joins the advancing troops.

During the period of preparation for the landing operation it is best to concentrate control of the airborne and military transport aviation large units in the hands of one person. We think this person might be the commander of the airborne troops.

The staffs of the airborne troops and the military transport aviation must coordinate in advance with the main staffs of the air forces and the air defense, the staff of the rear and the chief of the communications troops of the Ministry of Defense, and with the staffs of the interior military districts, on all matters connected with the allocation and preparation of airfield networks for the military transport aviation and with the necessary materiel-technical means, with the establishment of fuel

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reserves, with cover of the departure area for the landing operation and of aircraft of the military transport aviation on the flight up to the front line for the landing, as well as matters concerning the setting up of communications. Obviously, all this work will be completed in peacetime and reflected in the appropriate plans and then periodically refined. It seems to us that it is also desirable and completely possible to plan in advance the procedure by which the troops to be landed would come to the home airfields of the military transport aviation and the amount of the landing force to come to each airfield.

In accordance with the decisions adopted and the plans worked out, appropriate preparatory work must be conducted. Otherwise the necessary combat readiness of the airborne troops and military transport aviation could hardly be ensured.

In passing we should mention that the transfer of control of the landing force to the commander of the airborne troops in this period has yet another advantage: the staff of the front in the most crucial period of preparation and conduct of the initial operation is released from the varied and labor-consuming work connected with the preparation of the airborne troops and military transport aviation.

How then, in this case, does the staff of the front support the organization of combat actions of the landing force and its cooperation with the advancing troops, and who assigns the combat task to the landing force, and when? Here there can be two solutions. First, when the task is defined for the airborne landing force by the commander of the front. In this case the group of officers of the front staff will have to arrive in the departure area for the landing operation by aircraft, assign the task to the landing force and give the initial instructions for cooperation with the front troops. Second and, if you will, the most typical, when the combat task is defined for the landing force by the Supreme High Command, while corresponding instructions are given to the commander of the airborne division by the commander of the airborne troops. The staff of the front will simultaneously receive information concerning the time and area where the airborne landing force will be dropped (landed), concerning its tasks and instructions for support of the landing operation and the combat actions of the airborne division. This does not exclude the possibility that all these questions will be reflected in the plan of the initial front operation which has already been worked out in peacetime. Otherwise the commander of the front will have to make some corrections in his initial decision: to allocate aviation and missile/nuclear means for the fire support of the landing operation and support of the combat actions of the

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landing force.

The question may arise as to whether the data which the commander of the landing force will receive from the commander of the airborne troops are sufficient for the efficient organization of the combat actions and cooperation with the front troops. Or in simpler terms, in bypassing the staff of the front, can the landing force be assigned the task in its entirety? We think that when airborne landing forces are employed in the initial operations this is completely possible. Indeed, the enemy grouping we have identified basically will not change up to the beginning of war. Therefore, the data which the General Staff has at its disposal concerning the most important enemy targets in the landing area will be no less complete than those available in the front. In addition we should take into consideration that the initial nuclear strikes are planned by the Supreme High Command, and that the operational airborne landing forces will be employed to accomplish tasks primarily in the deep rear of the enemy at a distance of 300 to 500 kilometers or more from the front line. In these areas strikes against the enemy will be delivered by the front means, as well as by strategic missiles and long range aviation, so that the commander of the landing force will be able to receive comprehensive information from the airborne troop commander about the situation which is taking shape in the landing area at the moment of the drop and landing of the airborne division.

In this way the commander of the landing force will be given information about the enemy and have indicated to him the area and procedure for the landing, the combat task, where, when and against which targets the nuclear strikes will be delivered or planned, the yields of their bursts, the expected radiation situation, at what time and from what directions it is intended that the troops will enter the operating area of the landing force, the initial data on setting up communications with the staff of the front, and the procedure for maintaining and supporting the landing force. Of course, we are not excluding the possibility that the commander of the front might introduce some refinements or changes into the combat task and the procedure for supporting the landing force, should this be necessary. Technical communications means are used for such refinements. Information about progress in the preparation of the landing force, about possible changes in its composition, and of the beginning of the landing operation can be transmitted via these means.

The commander of the military transport aviation exercises control over the landing operation. In the course of preparation routes for the flight of transport aircraft with the landing force over their own

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territory must be refined in the staff of the district (army) of the Air Defense of the Country and in the staff of the interior military district (districts), and for the flight over enemy territory -- in the staff of the front. These very levels refine the procedure for covering the military transport aviation against strikes from the air and the procedure for fire support for the landing operation during the flight over enemy territory. When making an airborne landing from the deep rear it will be necessary in the majority of cases to refuel the transport aircraft at intermediate airfields both en route to the target, and on return routes. As a rule, the area for refueling will be located in the zone of the front. Therefore, all the questions in connection with refueling aircraft and servicing them will have to be resolved by the staff of the front, and the allocation of the necessary means will be entrusted for the sake of practicality to the commander of the air army. In so doing, the preparation of airfields and delivery of materiel should be carried out in advance, in peacetime. This pertains particularly to the establishment of fuel reserves at airfields amounting to thousands of tons (the condition being that 250 to 300 AN-8 and AN-12 aircraft are allocated for the landing of an airborne division).

The combat actions of the airborne landing force must be controlled by the commander of the front, who maintains communications with it through the operations group of the headquarters of the airborne troops. Under certain conditions, when a large airborne landing force will be dropped at a considerable depth, during the initial phase of its actions control may be implemented by the commander of the airborne troops, however, as the offensive operation develops it will be transferred to the staff of the front. With the approach of the advancing troops to the area of the landing force's actions, the commander of the army might assume control in the zone in which the landing force was landed.

Besides transmitting combat instructions to the airborne landing force and receiving information from it, the staff of the front must display particular concern for the systematic transmission of reconnaissance data to the landing force and for support of its combat actions.

As is known, an airborne division does not possess sufficient fire power. It has as yet no nuclear weapons. Therefore, support of its combat actions is one of the decisive conditions for the successful fulfilment of tasks in the enemy rear. In recent years in exercises a control procedure was adopted by which the commander of the landing force himself would assign the tasks to the commanders of the units allocated for support, bypassing the staff of the front. In this way the greatest effect was

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achieved, especially when delivering nuclear strikes against the enemy. In the initial period of war when preparation of an airborne division will be conducted in the interior of the country within very short time periods, the commander of the division will hardly be able to simultaneously coordinate questions of cooperation with the commanders of the supporting units. Apparently it will be necessary to give requests for strikes against the enemy to the staff of the front. We must also take into consideration that even cooperation which has been coordinated with some unit might be disrupted by enemy nuclear strikes. So it is more than likely that the landing force will have to call for the strikes of supporting means through the staff of the front.

The main means of neutralizing the enemy in support of the landing force which has been landed at a considerable depth will be missiles and aviation.

As the experience of exercises has shown, from the moment the target is detected by the reconnaissance of the landing force until the strike is delivered against it, not less than 40 minutes to one hour pass (reconnaissance report to the commander of the landing force, performance of the necessary calculations in the staff, transmission of the request to the staff of the front, making of the decision by the front commander, preparation of missiles for launching or the assigning of the task to the crew of the aircraft, flight of the aircraft or missile to the target). When destroying mobile targets, and these above all will be of interest to the airborne landing force, this is a large amount of time. By virtue of what has been said we think that in the front there should always be one or two missile batteries on alert and a certain number of delivery aircraft assigned to deliver strikes in support of the landing force.

The organization of fire control of supporting artillery with the approach of front troops was repeatedly studied in the course of the exercises and did not present any particular complexity.

Control over the delivery of materiel to the landing force in the course of battle can be set up in two ways. We think that it would be desirable to have the main area for supplying the landing forces in the interior of the country. This will provide greater safety for it and will create more favorable conditions for the preparation of reserves for a landing operation, primarily for a parachute drop. From here transport aircraft can deliver materiel to the landing force upon the request of its commander transmitted through the operations group of the headquarters of the airborne troops at the staff of the front. On the return routes, if

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the aircraft delivered their cargo by landing, they can evacuate the sick, wounded and other casualties from the area of combat actions of the landing force to hospitals which have been specially deployed by the front in the aircraft refueling area.

Aside from that, it is also necessary to have an alternate supply area set up in the zone of the front to supply the landing force. Control of the delivery of materiel to the landing force from the given area will be implemented by the chief of the front rear. This area cannot be considered the main one. It will have been subjected to enemy strikes to a great degree. In addition, and this is very essential, the rear services of the front do not have the necessary forces and means to prepare cargoes for a parachute drop. From here cargoes can be delivered to the landing force only by landing. It is not at all advantageous to deliver parachute drop equipment to the front and to allocate the qualified personnel. This leads to splitting up the forces of the rear services of the airborne troops.

In conclusion we should mention that the proposed diagram for the control of operational landing forces, in our opinion, will be desirable not only in the initial period of war, but also when conducting the subsequent operations of the ground forces or the navy.

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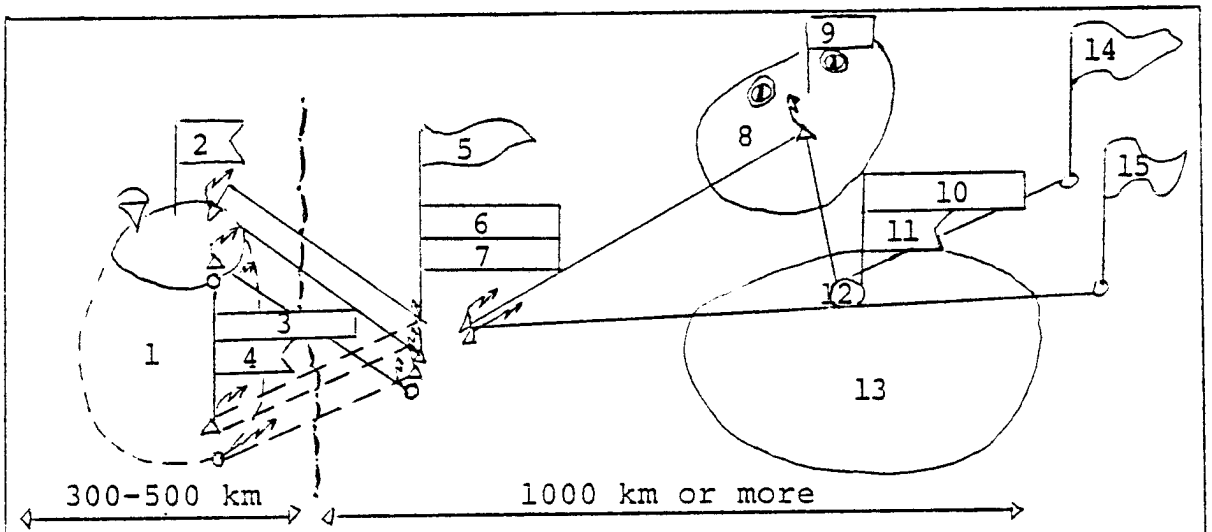
Diagram of the Organization of Control
of an Operational Airborne Landing



Note: The Military Transport Aviation lines of communications are not shown on the diagram.

1. Area of Combat Actions of the Airborne Landing Force
2. Airborne Division
3. Forward Command Post of Airborne Troops
4. Airborne Division
5. Western Front
6. Forward Command Post of the Military Transport Aviation
7. Operations Group of the Airborne Troops
8. Supply Area of the Airborne Landing Force
9. Chief of the Supply Area for the Airborne Landing Force
10. Commander of the Airborne Troops, Commander of the Military Transport Aviation
11. Airborne Division
12. Communications Center
13. Departure Area for Landing Operations
14. Air Defense District of the Air Defense Forces of the Country
15. Interior Military District

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